



April 18, 2005

FACT SHEET: LOWER COLUMBIA SALMON RECOVERY PLAN

Today's Action

Today, NOAA Fisheries' Northwest Regional Administrator, Bob Lohn, together with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, representatives of the State of Washington, local and tribal entities and other interested parties, gather for NOAA's announcement of the release of the Draft Interim Salmon Recovery Plan for the Washington portion of three salmon and steelhead species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

The Draft Plan was initially developed, with NOAA involvement, by the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board—a locally-led effort in southwest Washington. The Draft Plan--available for 60 days' public comment--is the first locally-developed, science-based recovery plan to be endorsed by NOAA for the recovery of ESA-listed salmon and steelhead in the Pacific Northwest. The draft plan includes specific measures to recover all salmon and steelhead species that exist in approximately 1,700 river and stream miles on the Washington side of the lower Columbia River subbasins from the Chinook River near the Pacific Ocean to and including the Little White Salmon River in the Columbia River Gorge area. The actions in the plan would protect and recover salmon in areas encompassing 5,700 square miles, 13 cities, and a population of nearly 500,000 in Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania, Wahkiakum, and portions of Lewis and Pacific Counties in Washington. Although the plan released today is "interim," NOAA Fisheries intends to finalize a complete ESA recovery plan for the entire Lower Columbia after working with the state of Oregon to complete plan elements for the Oregon side of the Lower Columbia. .

NOAA Fisheries' endorsement will help solidify federal commitments to implement recovery activities under the plan. It will also facilitate greater certainty and consistency of literally hundreds of existing and future ESA section 7 consultations and Habitat Conservation Plans with recovery plan activities in the Pacific Northwest.

Background

NOAA Fisheries listed Lower Columbia steelhead as threatened under ESA in 1998, and listed Lower Columbia River chinook and Columbia River chum as threatened in 1999. The State of Washington established the Lower Columbia Fish Recovery Board in southwest Washington in 1998 to coordinate salmon and steelhead recovery efforts in the lower Columbia River region. The Board is comprised of 15 representatives, including members from the state legislature, city and county governments, the Cowlitz Tribe, private property owners, hydroelectric project operators, environmental interests, and other concerned citizens. The Board convened workgroups that prepared drafts of the plan leading up to the submission of a final multi-species recovery plan to NOAA Fisheries in December 2004. A NOAA Fisheries-led Recovery Team comprised of 12 scientists identified fish populations, provided technical advice, and prepared recommendations on salmon viability goals. The plan is based on these recommendations. The draft plan includes a supplement, added by NOAA, which ties the plan to ESA requirements and describes NOAA Fisheries' intent to use the plan as an interim regional recovery plan for the Washington Lower Columbia Management Unit.

Key Components of the Draft Recovery Plan

The Draft Lower Columbia Salmon Recovery Plan includes several elements:

- *Evaluation of Current Population Status.* The Draft Plan evaluates the current distribution, diversity, abundance, and productivity for each salmon population, compares them to historical trends, and evaluates the current risk of extinction for each population.
- *Comprehensive Analyses of Limiting Factors.* The Draft Plan includes a comprehensive analysis of limiting factors to salmon and steelhead throughout their lifecycle, including harvest, hatchery management, hydro operations, habitat and estuary conditions, predation, and what is needed to address these limiting factors.

- *Recovery Goals and Actions Consistent with ESA.* The Draft Plan sets recovery goals and activities that provide NOAA Fisheries objective, measurable criteria that, when met, would result in a determination that the species could be proposed for de-listing. It also identifies specific actions to achieve the goals and parties responsible for implementation.
- *Monitoring and Adaptive Management.* To ensure effectiveness of actions and the most current science, the Draft Plan allows for regular and periodic review of the progress and effectiveness of the actions and status of the fish populations.

Significant Federal Commitment for Salmon Habitat Activities in the Lower Columbia & Estuary

- Between FY 2000 and FY 2004, **NOAA Fisheries** has provided over **\$5.78 million** specifically for the Lower Columbia region out of the State of Washington's total of \$136 million from the **Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund**. These funds have been used for at least 17 salmon habitat protection and restoration projects to improve miles of salmon rearing, riparian habitat and fish passage. Examples of projects funded include:
 - *Larson Creek Fish Passage Project.* NOAA has provided \$61,500 to the Lower Columbia River Fish Enhancement Group to restore two-thirds of a mile of fish passage to a beaver pond/wetland/stream area near the City of Camas currently inaccessible due to a culvert and stream conditions.
 - *Wood's Landing Chum Spawning Site Protection.* NOAA, together with the Columbia Land Trust, has funded over \$750,000 to acquire 6.78 acres near the mouth of the Columbia River and Hardy/Hamilton Creeks to protect riparian habitat for the largest Lower Columbia chum spawning site.
 - *Lower Washougal Restoration.* NOAA, with the City of Camas, Georgia-Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, Lower Columbia River Estuary Partnership, Concrete Products, and private property landowners, has provided \$200,000 to address degraded floodplain conditions identified by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife as a limiting factor for ESA-listed Lower Columbia Chinook.
- The FY 2005 **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers'** budget included **\$2 million** for **Columbia River estuary restoration**, retrofitting tidegates, and restoring and maintaining native tidal marsh to aid migrating juvenile and adult salmon. Restoration projects that are already underway include:
 - *Crims Island,* where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is working with the Columbia Land Trust, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bonneville Power Administration, and other partners to protect and restore approximately 425 acres of tidal emergent marsh, swamp, slough, and riparian forest habitat on Crims Island in the upper Columbia River Estuary to benefit salmon and other species.
 - *Brownsmead,* where the Columbia River Estuary Study Task Force (CREST) will use Bonneville Power Administration funding and technical engineering and environmental expertise from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to restore juvenile salmon habitat with tidal flow to about 9.2 miles of sloughs in an area of about 2,068 acres of diked floodplain.
- Since 2000, the **Bonneville Power Administration** has provided nearly **\$10.5 million** for 17 contracts with the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife, the Lower Columbia River Estuary Program, the Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce (CREST), Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission, and local entities for instream and estuary habitat restoration, watershed assessment, and enhancement activities for salmon in the Lower Columbia..

Recent Salmon Returns for Lower Columbia ESA-Listed Stocks:

ESA-Listed Salmon Species	2000	2001	2002	2003	% Change 2000- 2003
Lower Columbia Chum	2,500	2,000	4,000	20,000	+ 700%
Lower Columbia Chinook	18,908	37,569	72,468	NA*	+ 283%
Lower Columbia Steelhead	4,200	5,000	9626	12002	+ 185%

NA* - data not available at this time. Percent of change calculated from 2002. Source: Northwest Fisheries Science Center